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U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



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16613
September 10, 2004

USCG-2004-16860-48

Mr. Miles Croom
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
Southeast Regional Office
9721 Executive Center Drive North
St. Petersburg, FL 33072-2432

Dear Mr. Croom:

Your letter dated August 4, 2004 to LT Derek Dostie, received by my office on August 12, 2004, provides comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Gulf Landing LLC Deepwater Port license application (USCG-2004-16860.) In accordance with Section 305(b)(4)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), you provided conservation recommendations for Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) related to the proposed Deepwater Port to support the review of the application being conducted by the Maritime Administration and the United States Coast Guard (USCG). In accordance with Section 305(b)(4)(B) of MSA, this constitutes our interim response to your recommendations.

We have reviewed your recommendations and the comments included in your letter. We have identified areas where we need additional information from NOAA staff to properly assess the potential impact of the proposed deepwater port on EFH. I sent an email to Ms. Kelly Shotts, NOAA Southeast Regional Office, detailing our request for additional information. We are continuing to coordinate with your staff to resolve the issues raised by your letter.

In addition, I sent a letter to the applicant, Gulf Landing LLC, requesting additional information that is needed to respond to your letter. A copy of this letter to Gulf Landing, which also stopped the statutory timeline for processing the deepwater port license application, is enclosed.

I will keep you informed of our progress on evaluating your recommendations. If you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to contact me at 202-267-0225.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M.A. Prescott".

M. A. Prescott
Chief, Deepwater Ports Standards Division
U. S. Coast Guard
By direction

Enclosure: August 27, 2004 to G. Koehler, Gulf Landing, LLC

Copy w/encl.: K. Shotts, NOAA